

April 2009

Volume 12, Issue 2

Anniversary Celebration, 60s Style

The Alexandria Community Services Board is celebrating its fortieth year of providing mental health, intellectual disability and substance abuse services. Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center, a nonprofit volunteer group, is honoring its twenty-fifth year of support and advocacy for CSB clients. The two organizations held a community celebration on March 19 at the George Washington Middle School.

Mike Gilmore, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Alexandria CSB, said, "This grim economic climate might seem like an unlikely environment to host a celebration; but now, more than ever, it is important to promote community awareness about the CSB's forty years of remarkable service to Alexandrians with mental disorders and to commemorate Board members and staff re-dedicating themselves to continuing this vital work."

Mary Anne Weber, CSB Chair, said, "With all of this uncertainty and gloom, one might wonder whether the CSB and Friends should celebrate their anniversaries at all. And the answer is a resounding yes. The City needs to recognize 40 years of recovery and saved lives. And the public needs to join the celebration to meet the staff who is so determined and dedicated, to meet the clients, their families and the volunteers who have made it all work."



Over 500 people attended the party and enjoyed food donated from 30 restaurants, 60s music and dancing, and prizes for the best 60s costumes.

Ruth, a CSB client, with Carol Jones-Gaiter, Case Manager.

Special guests included Mayor William D. Euille; Vice Mayor and former CSB Board Member, Del Pepper; Council Member and former CSB Board Member, Rob Krupicka; City Manager, Jim Hartmann; Asst. Commissioner of DMHMRSAS, Frank Tetrick; and Miss Alexandria, Erika Thomas.

No CSB funds were used for the celebration thanks to the donations and the generous contributions of several CSB and Friends Board members.



L►R: Audrey Jones, HIM Director; Carol Layer, Director of Extended Care; Jane Hassell, Director of Administration; Deborah Warren, Director of Child, Family & Prevention; Mike Gilmore, Executive Director and Susan Drachsler, Co-Chair of Friends.

State Department Changes Name

The General Assembly passed legislation to change the name of the State Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services (DMHMRSAS) to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (BHDS). The change will take

effect July 1, 2009. Commissioner James Reinhard, M.D., said, "Not only is the new name less cumbersome, but it more broadly reflects the department's mission and is flexible enough for the department to grow into other service areas, like autism. In addition, the new name moves away from the stigma associated with the term 'retardation'."

Last summer, DMHMRSAS conducted surveys for staff and stakeholders to submit opinions on options for a new name. The nearly 1,500 responses reflected support for the new name. At present, the City of Alexandria's Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse continues with the same name, but it will likely be changed in the future.

**Our phone numbers have changed.
See the back page for a listing of new
numbers.**



A Caring Community Promoting Respect, Recovery, Hope

Decriminalizing Mental Illness: Diversion from Jail to Treatment



For decades, people with serious mental illnesses have been passed back and forth between the mental health and criminal justice systems. Jails nationwide, including Alexandria, house large numbers of persons with psychiatric disabilities. A Department of Justice study found that 6-12% of inmates have a serious mental illness (64% have a mental health problem), and the majority of them have a co-occurring substance use problem. And once arrested, persons with mental illness spend more time in jail and cost more to incarcerate than inmates without mental illness.

Why does the Alexandria Adult Detention Center house so many persons with a severe mental illness? Liz Wixson, LCSW, Director of the CSB's Acute and Emergency Care Services, said, "We have seen a significant decline in the number of inpatient psychiatric beds available in our region over the last few years. This problem, coupled with the reality that persons with serious mental illness need access to intensive community support and services to help them live productive lives, has resulted in the large numbers of mentally ill persons entering the correctional system unnecessarily. Alexandria needs to do a better job of coordinating and increasing access to services so that clients can lead law-abiding, healthy lives in our city. If we can succeed in increasing our programs effectiveness by building new relationships, it's a win-win for clients AND the community at large."

While valuable services have existed in Alexandria for years, there was no coordinated effort to effectively address the problem of incarcerating people for behaviors that resulted from a mental illness and lack of access to treatment. This changed a year ago when staff from the CSB, the Sheriff's Office, the Alexandria Police Department, the Alexandria Public Defender's Office and the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office joined together to develop a multiagency approach. This collaboration has resulted in several initiatives to address the problem:

~The Alexandria Detention Center opened a "Re-Entry" Unit to prepare inmates for re-entry into the community. In addition, a CSB Forensic Discharge Planner was hired to help clients leaving the jail obtain services in the community, thereby bridging the gap that often results in re-arrest and re-incarceration.

~The Alexandria Public Defender Office created the Alexandria Jericho Project. This program creates alternative sentencing plans for seriously mentally ill persons that can be considered by judges in lieu of

incarceration. Alternative sentencing plans are community treatment plans that include services such as treatment, housing and supervision.

~The CSB's Detox Program expanded its Jail Diversion Program. This program is a place for police officers to bring persons picked up for "drunk in public" and offers treatment of lieu of incarceration.

~A Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) within the Alexandria Police Department is being developed. CIT programs have been proven to: dramatically improve outcomes in police interactions with persons with mental illness, decrease the arrest rate and reported injuries among persons with mental illness, increase referrals of mentally ill persons into treatment, and decrease the rate of officer injury. In the coming year, a CIT program of 20 Alexandria officers will be created. (The CSB is applying for additional grant funding to further support this initiative.)

The CSB recently received a quarter of a million dollars in on-going grant funds from the state to expand jail diversion efforts. In part, this grant funds:

~A Jail Diversion Coordinator to provide immediate assessment and linkage to services for jail diversion clients.

~A Mental Health Probation Officer in the Office of Probation and Parole to work with CSB staff and other agencies in developing strategies to improve clients' chances for success.

~Funds to purchase services or items that will help clients to be successful in the community, for example, the first month of a group home fee after release from jail.

For more information about the CSB's jail diversion programs, contact Liz Wixson at 703-746-3400.



Efforts at decriminalizing mental illness in Alexandria will only be successful through collaboration. Shown above: Dana Lawhorne, Sheriff; Liz Wixson, CSB Director of Acute Care and Emergency Services; and Dave Baker, Police Chief.

Mayoral Visit: Hope is in Bloom at Brent Place



The Alexandria CSB's Brent Place Tutoring and Mentoring Program has teen and adult mentors who provide twice-weekly tutoring and mentoring to the high-risk children living at Brent Place Apartments. The prevention program is one of several led by Amalia Quiñones at Brent Place Apartments and at Samuel Tucker Elementary School. The program, along with Quiñones' position, is facing elimination in the City's fiscal year 2010 budget.

In March, the children, their mentors and parents spoke at the City Council Public Hearing. Following their appearance, Alexandria Mayor, William D. Euille, was inspired to visit the Brent Place Program. He told those gathered, "I was very impressed with your presentations at the public hearing. It is always important to stand up for what you believe in."

Speaking to the children, the Mayor said, "this is a wonderful program that helps you focus on your education." In addition to the importance of education, the Mayor spoke about diversity, character, helping others and hope. The Mayor entertained questions from the children and invited them to visit City Hall. In gratitude for his visit, program participants gave the Mayor a booklet of photos, drawings and messages representing their twelve countries of origin.

Tricia Bassing, LCSW, CPP-ATOD, the CSB's Prevention Team Leader said, "As a result of this program, the children have another caring adult in their lives, are more connected

to school, have learned how to say no to alcohol and drugs, have improved their grades and attendance and have parents who are more involved in their education."

Brent Place Apartments donates space and utilities for the program. The volunteers donate their time. The nonprofit group Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center has donated money for snacks and other small tokens. However, without the single paid CSB position, the program will be discontinued in July.



Volunteer mentors and youth at the Brent Place Program gathered around Mayor William D. Euille (rear center) and program coordinator Amalia Quiñones (to the left of the Mayor).

Brent Place Property Manager Sue Ludwic explained, "This program provides educational and recreational opportunities to keep low income families' kids from being exposed to criminal activity since they really can not afford to send their kids to private functions. We have 200 children at Brent Place. These children are our future. We need more quality programs like this, not fewer."

At the request of then City Manager, Phil Sunderland, the CSB began providing services to the Brent Place community in 2001. Now, forced to make excruciatingly difficult budget decisions, Council may have to discontinue the Brent Place Program. However, the children, volunteers and staff remain hopeful that this program will be saved.

Cultural Competence Training

The CSB's Cultural Competence and Diversity Committee sponsored a presentation by Cecily Rodriguez, Director of the Office of Cultural and Linguistic Competence for the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. Findings from *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General (2001)* indicate that mental health disparities are inextricably linked to race, culture and ethnicity. People of color, as well as members of other underserved cultural groups, have less access to, and availability of mental health services. Even when services are available, members of these groups tend to receive a poorer quality of care that does not meet their unique needs. For information on training, cultural competency plan templates, targeted recruitment, or simply for brainstorming, contact cecily.rodriguez@co.dmhmrsva.gov.

How is Culture Like an Iceberg?

Celebration
food, dress, art, drama,
literature, language

Notions of modesty, concept of beauty,
ideals, body language, beliefs about sin,
child-rearing, attitudes toward elders

Tempo of work, patterns of superior/subordinated
relationships, concept of humor, conversational style

New Alexandria CSB Phone Numbers

CSB Main Number Mental Health Center	703-746-3400 (720 N. Saint Asaph)	Extended Care Administration	703-746-3500 (King Street, 5th Fl.)
Emergency Services	703-746-3401	24-Hour Detox Unit	703-746-3636
Intake (Adult & Child)	703-746-3535	Substance Abuse Services	703-746-3600 (Mill Road)
Medication Refill Line	703-746-3434	Reimbursement	703-746-3444
Clubhouse	703-746-3456	Alexandria	703-746-3333
Intellectual Disability	703-746-3333	PIE	703-746-3350

To make comments, suggestions of story ideas or contributions, call Jennifer Cohen Cordero at 703.838.4455, x161 or email jennifer.cohen-cordero@alexandriava.gov



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